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Source: *Libraries & Culture*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Summer, 1994), pp. 282-296

Published by: [University of Texas Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25542662>

Accessed: 04/05/2013 07:54

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“Public Libraries” in Ancient Rome: Ideology and Reality

T. Keith Dix

The late first century B.C. saw the first state libraries in Rome, projected by Julius Caesar and carried out by Asinius Pollio and Augustus. Ancient authors who recorded the establishment of these libraries sounded the theme that works of literature had become “public property” and that libraries lay “open” to all readers. This paper considers in what sense the libraries of Rome were “public” and whether the ideology of public access put forward by Roman authors corresponded to a reality of general access. Several anecdotes offer direct evidence for consultation of the libraries, but they involve authors close to imperial circles who might naturally be expected to have won access to libraries under imperial control. Other evidence includes the use of state libraries as the setting for authors’ recitations, the presence of libraries in the great bath-buildings of Rome, and the use of libraries as vehicles for official recognition and for censorship of literature.

Before the end of the Roman Republic there was no “public library” in Rome to which authors or readers might resort for works that they did not possess. With libraries entirely in private hands, and with the book trade an unreliable source, cooperation among those with literary interests was a necessity. Friends with literary interests would borrow books from one another, as Cicero did from Atticus. Aristocrats who owned libraries, like Lucullus, might open them to those without the means or opportunity to acquire their own collections, like Greek men of letters; access to a library became another benefit which a patron might bestow on a client. A large collection of books was an amenity, like other amenities, available only to the aristocracy and its dependents.¹

Providing those other amenities—comfortable seating at public spectacles, running water, baths, green space, works of art—to urban dwellers had already become an important element in the building programs undertaken at Rome by powerful and ambitious individuals during the late republic.² As possession of a library became more common among members of the upper class, it was perhaps inevitable that books would come to be seen as another amenity to be bestowed upon the lower classes. Perhaps it was also inevitable that an aristocrat would make a conspicuous display of his interest in literary culture by founding a “public library.”

Julius Caesar included libraries among his plans for “adorning and building up” the city of Rome. The imperial biographer Suetonius wrote that Caesar intended “to make public (*publicare*) the largest possible Greek and Latin libraries” and that Caesar had assigned the task of obtaining and arranging the libraries to Marcus Terentius Varro, the great Roman polymath.³ Caesar did not live to see the fulfillment of his plans for a library, but Asinius Pollio, consul in 40 B.C. and one of Caesar’s closest lieutenants, established a library between 39 and 28 B.C. in the Atrium Libertatis, a public building which had previously housed a shrine of the goddess Liberty, and Rome’s census records.⁴ Rome soon had two more libraries, both associated with the building program of the emperor Augustus. To the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, which he had built between 36 and 28 B.C., Augustus added porticoes with a Latin and Greek library. The porticoes and library were dedicated along with the temple in 28 B.C.⁵ The Porticus of Octavia also included a library; some ancient authors say that Augustus had the portico and library built in the name of his sister Octavia, while others say that Octavia herself had them built, as a memorial to her son Marcellus.⁶ Subsequent emperors had additional libraries built.⁷

The Roman authors who recorded the establishment of these libraries sounded the theme that works of literature had become “public property” accessible to all. The poet Ovid, writing about A.D. 9, carried this theme back to the time of their establishment. He concluded a long list of Greek poets who wrote on the topic of love with the assertion that their works (unlike his own) were to be found in Rome’s libraries: “These are mixed in with the memorials of learned men, and made public (*publica facta*), they are accessible through the gifts of the leaders.”⁸ Pliny the Elder, writing before A.D. 79, described Asinius Pollio as “the first to make the genius of man public property (*rem publicam*) by dedicating a library.”⁹ Suetonius, writing about A.D. 120, used the verb *publicare*, “to open to the public,” in describing Caesar’s plan. If we follow the lead of these authors and refer to the Roman libraries as “public libraries,” we must understand, of course, that they were not the same as modern public libraries.¹⁰ The remainder of this paper will consider the nature of Roman public libraries and whether the ideology of “public access” suggested by Roman authors corresponded to some reality of access.

The earliest reference to Rome’s public libraries comes from the poet Horace, in the first book of his *Epistles*, probably published about 20 B.C. Horace warned his friend Celsus not to rely upon works found in the Palatine library for his inspiration:

What does my Celsus do? He has been warned and must be warned frequently, that he seek private resources and avoid touching whatever

writings Palatine Apollo has received, lest, if by chance one day a flock of birds comes to demand back their feathers, his little crow stripped of its stolen colors inspire laughter.¹¹

While Horace does not use the term *public* in this passage, his mention of “private resources” (*privatae opes*) certainly suggests a contrast with the “public resources” of the Palatine library.

Celsus, at least, could have consulted the Palatine library, but that need imply nothing about more general access, as Celsus was secretary to the future emperor Tiberius¹² and surely able to enter the library on that account. Furthermore, we need not even assume that Celsus himself was in the library, but only that Horace was warning him against reliance on those works already famous enough to be found there.¹³ Perhaps Celsus was to imagine that other readers in the Palatine library would discover his indiscriminate borrowings, or that the works he robbed, the agents of their own revenge in Horace’s image of the flock of birds and the crow, would prove his work unworthy of the Palatine library.

In another of his *Epistles*, this one addressed to Augustus, Horace did seem to link the Palatine library and readers:

Come indeed and give brief attention to these, who prefer to entrust themselves to a reader rather than to suffer the contempt of an arrogant spectator, if you wish to fill with books the gift worthy of Apollo and to give the spur to bards, that they may seek green Helicon with greater zeal.¹⁴

Horace contrasted the situation of the playwright, who offers his work to spectators, and the situation of the poet like himself, who entrusts his work to a reader. He appealed to Augustus to devote some attention to poets; given the emperor’s spur, they would fill the “gift worthy for Apollo,” that is, the Palatine library, with books. If the Palatine library was the place for poets who entrusted their works to readers, then it ought to have been a place for readers, as well.

Ovid was the other author from the Augustan age to mention the libraries. Banished to Tomi on the Black Sea in A.D. 8, he continued to write poetry and to send it to Rome. When he sent his poem *Tristia* 3.1 to Rome, the poem speaks first to a “friendly reader” (line 2) and later asks its readers where a book ought to go (lines 19–20). One reader leads the poem to the three libraries, beginning with the Palatine library, where the works of learned men both old and new “lie open for readers” (lines 63–64). This poem fails to win admittance to any public library, and looks in vain for its “brothers,” Ovid’s earlier poems. Because a “public lodging” has been denied, the poem can only pray to be allowed to hide in a private place

(lines 79–80).¹⁵ For Ovid, then, it seems that the presence of readers made the libraries “public.”

Both Horace and Ovid, poets writing in the age when Rome received her first public libraries, implied that these libraries were open to readers. Both seem to have believed that these libraries could have made their own works available to a wider audience. As Horace’s words to Augustus suggest, the prospect of a wider readership was one spur to literary production which Rome’s public libraries might have provided.

The next group of reference to Rome’s libraries comes from the second century A.D. Aulus Gellius, the author of an antiquarian collection entitled *Attic Nights*, mentioned various books he read while in the libraries in the *domus Tiberiana*, the temple of Peace, and the Forum of Trajan.¹⁶ As with Horace’s friend Celsus, Gellius’s ties to imperial circles may have won him access to the libraries. Gellius counted among his friends Cornelius Fronto, the distinguished orator and tutor in rhetoric to the future emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, and the scholar Sulpicius Apollinaris, teacher of both Gellius himself and the emperor Pertinax.

Gellius seems not only to have read in these libraries but also to have conducted philosophical discussions there with his friends; he recorded a conversation with at least one friend in the library of the Forum of Trajan, and another with Sulpicius and some of their friends while seated in the *domus Tiberiana* library. In these anecdotes, Gellius and his friends appear to be using these libraries as private spaces, as they engaged in an activity usually associated in Latin literature with the dining rooms, porticoes, and gardens of townhouses and country estates.¹⁷ In that connection, the *domus Tiberiana* library seems the least likely of those usually included on the list of “public libraries” to have been accessible to the public, since it was part of the imperial residence. On the other hand, Gellius set several discussions in clearly public spaces, such as baths, temples, and public squares, and even in the *area Palatina*, the reception area of the imperial palace, where a jurist and a philosopher converse in the midst of a crowd awaiting an audience with the emperor.¹⁸

The *domus Tiberiana* library figures in an episode involving Gellius’s friend Cornelius Fronto. The future emperor Marcus Aurelius writes to Fronto that he has just read two orations of Cato the Elder. He anticipates that Fronto will send a slave to the Palatine library to get the books for himself, but warns Fronto that he has taken these books from the Palatine library with him to some residence outside Rome. Therefore, he says, Fronto must “work on” the librarian of the *domus Tiberiana* and bestow something on that librarian to obtain another copy of the orations.¹⁹ That an imperial heir could “borrow” books from the libraries should be no surprise; that even a Fronto had to go hat in hand to a librarian for the same

privilege might also be no surprise, for ancient librarians may have been just as wary of their patrons as are some of their modern counterparts.

One further group of references to Rome's libraries comes in the late collection of imperial biographies known as the *Historia Augusta*. These biographies cover the years from A.D. 117 to 284 and present themselves as the work of six different authors who lived during the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine. The authorship, date, purpose, and reliability of the biographies remain matters of dispute.²⁰ The library references all come from four of the last five biographies in the collection; these five biographies are attributed to "Flavius Vopiscus." This author claimed to have used books from the *Bibliotheca Ulpia*, that is, the library in the Forum of Trajan, and from the *domus Tiberiana*.²¹ He made this claim in the second chapter of the biography of Probus, a biography which he began with a citation from Aulus Gellius. Perhaps his reading in Gellius also inspired him to mention the libraries in the Forum of Trajan and the *domus Tiberiana*—two of the three libraries mentioned by Gellius—as his sources. In that second chapter of the biography of Probus, "Flavius Vopiscus" wrote that in his time, books of the *Bibliotheca Ulpia* were in the Baths of Diocletian (a point to which I shall return), while in his other references to that library, he either states outright or implies that the books he used were in the *Bibliotheca Ulpia* itself.²²

The reliability of the library reference in the *Historia Augusta* has generally been questioned or dismissed.²³ Even if the claims about consulting the libraries are false, however, their purpose must have been to lend verisimilitude and credibility to the biographies. That an author, or at least the author of an emperor's biography, could consult the libraries must have seemed plausible to the intended audience.

This survey of the direct evidence for access to Rome's public libraries reveals the difficulties inherent in the evidence. We turn instinctively to authors for such evidence; but authors in the Roman world, almost by definition, were members of the upper classes who addressed themselves to a readership composed largely of other members of the upper classes. Those authors who praise "public access" to books most likely had in mind a "public" made up of others like themselves. Given the high level of illiteracy in the ancient world, they had no reason to imagine great hordes of readers scurrying to the libraries.²⁴ One circumstance, however, suggests that we might have found at least a mildly jostling crowd of readers in Rome's libraries. For men like Horace and Ovid, who came to Rome from outlying areas of Italy, literature provided an entree to the highest reaches of the Roman aristocracy.²⁵ We might expect at least one author to complain about the crush of aspiring authors in the libraries, just as Pliny the Younger mentions the great number of authors' recitations he is expected to attend; but we do not find such complaints.²⁶

The available evidence, then, does not encourage us to imagine a crowd of readers. We might, on the other hand, picture a crowd of listeners in Rome's libraries, for they seemed to have served as a setting for authors' recitations of their works, a fundamental form of "publication" in the ancient world. Providing a hall for a reading was one of the traditional responsibilities of an author's patron; making the public libraries available for recitations is one way for the founders to extend their literary patronage, just as the Ptolemies seem to have done in their library at Alexandria.²⁷ Asinius Pollio, founder of the first public library, seems to have fostered the growing popularity of public recitations. The elder Seneca attributes to Pollio the invention of the practice of public recitations by authors; while that cannot be literally true, Pollio does seem to have established recitations on a more formal basis and may even have presented them in the library of the Atrium Libertatis.²⁸ The Palatine library also seems to have been the setting for public recitations. Horace provided perhaps the earliest reference in *Epistle* 2.2, probably written in 19 B.C., when he described a competition between a lyric poet (probably Horace himself) and an elegist in an *aedes*, a "temple"; and the practice seems to have continued at least until the second century A.D.²⁹

If the founders of Rome's public libraries intended from the outset to use the libraries for public recitations, they must have provided rooms suitable for that purpose within the libraries. In the case of the Palatine library, provisions which may have been made for recitations probably made the library suitable for other kinds of meetings, as well. The emperor Augustus seems to have used the Palatine library as a kind of audience hall, holding meetings of the Senate, revising jury lists, and receiving embassies there, and the Senate continued to meet in the library at least through the reign of Tiberius and probably through the reign of Nero. Suetonius says that Augustus, when older, frequently convened the Senate there, presumably to spare himself the trip to the Forum.³⁰ The practice, however, probably had begun already in 23 B.C., when Augustus, although far from an old man, became so ill that he was not expected to live. The Senate presumably began to meet in the newly opened library during his convalescence.³¹ This practice suggests that the Palatine library was viewed as practically an extension of the house of Augustus; consequently, however great public access may have been to the library on a normal basis, it must have been possible to control physical access to the library building when the Emperor was expected to be present. Paradoxically, then, the use of libraries as audience halls suggests that access to them was, or could be, restricted.³²

I have devoted my attention thus far to public libraries in the temple, forum, and palace complexes of central Rome, such as the Palatine library, the library in the temple of Peace or in the Forum of Trajan. These libraries

may always have remained the preserves of men like Aulus Gellius and Fronto; the "general public," on the other hand, may have frequented a different group of libraries, those in the great imperial bath buildings of Rome.

The Baths of Trajan (dedicated in A.D. 109), of Caracalla (dedicated in 216), and of Diocletian (dedicated in 305 or 306) all contain rooms identified as libraries.³³ The presence of libraries fits with the general notion that the great imperial baths provided facilities not only for bathing, but for a wide range of athletic, social, and cultural activities, as well. As a recent book on ancient baths points out, however, neither a single inscription nor any ancient author clearly recorded such activities in bath buildings.³⁴

One inscription from Rome suggests the existence of libraries in the baths; it commemorates a slave from the imperial household, who seems to have held the position of "maintenance man of the Greek library of the baths" (*vilicus thermarum bybliothecae Graecae*).³⁵ On the other hand, the inscription may record two distinct positions held in succession by the same slave: "maintenance man of the baths" (*vilicus thermarum*) and "employee in the Greek library" (*a bybliotheca Graeca*).³⁶ We have already encountered the one reference in Latin literature to libraries in baths, which comes from the *Historia Augusta*. The author of the life of Probus wrote that, in his time, books from the *Bibliotheca Ulpia*, that is, the library of the Forum of Trajan, were in the Baths of Diocletian—a statement that he seemed to contradict in all his other references to the *Bibliotheca Ulpia*, where he either stated outright or implied that the books he used were in the *Bibliotheca Ulpia* itself. Perhaps only some portion of the books from the Forum of Trajan had been moved to the Baths of Diocletian for storage or to establish a "branch library": at any rate, this notice may be taken to indicate at least that libraries were known in baths.³⁷

The primary evidence for activities other than bathing in the imperial baths has been the architecture of the bath buildings themselves. In bath complexes as in other buildings, libraries have been identified on the basis of the presence of niches in their walls; these niches are assumed to have been the bookcases. One scholar has now demonstrated that the niches in rooms identified as libraries are sufficiently deep to have contained ancient bookrolls; others, however, have pointed out that very little evidence survives for the construction of either shelving or self-supporting bookcases in the identified examples and that access to the niches, particularly to their upper levels, would have been difficult.³⁸ In general, then, while the presence of libraries in the imperial baths has generally been taken for granted, caution seems to be in order in the identification of those libraries.

Some further evidence for public access to libraries comes from the cities of the Roman Empire. Once again we meet Aulus Gellius, who consulted

works in the library at Tibur (modern Tivoli) just outside Rome and at Patrae (modern Patras) in Greece.³⁹ A friend of Gellius found a work by Aristotle in the library at Tibur and actually took the book out from the library to his friends in a villa at Tibur; Gellius copied a passage from the book. As in the anecdotes from Rome, we do not know whether Gellius and his friends enjoyed a special privilege to consult and borrow books from local libraries, due to their connection with imperial circles, or whether they availed themselves of a right extended to all. In Halicarnassus in Asia Minor in the second century A.D., the works of a man honored by the city were placed in the city's libraries at public expense in order to instruct the youth; this provision, while suggesting broad access, was probably of greatest benefit to the children of the local aristocracy.⁴⁰ The one explicit statement of regulations comes from the library of Pantainos, which sat beside a very busy corner of the Athenian Agora; it specifies that no book would be taken out, a provision which might be taken as evidence for public access or perhaps as a precaution against theft.⁴¹

Beyond the issue of access to the public libraries, we can consider one other aspect of their operation which might be described as "public." These libraries held out not only the prospect of wider readership during the author's lifetime, but also that of a more enduring fame. The potential importance of public libraries as vehicles for official recognition of literary merit and for the preservation of authors' works and memories seems to have been recognized immediately, as the remarks of Horace and Ovid indicate. When Ovid said of the Palatine library that "whatever ancient men and modern have drawn from learned breast, lies open to be examined by readers," he described an institution which preserved the great works of the past while placing beside them works of the present to be preserved for the future.⁴² Horace foresaw that the encouragement of Augustus, that is, some kind of official recognition of authors, would fill the Palatine library with books. Ovid's poem *Tristia* 3.1 heads straight for the public libraries and settles for a private spot only when rejected. Other authors must have done what Ovid seems to have done in *Tristia* 3.1—sending a copy of his latest work to the libraries. The poet Martial, for example, asked one Sextus, the "eloquent worshipper of Palatine Minerva," to find a place for Martial's books near the works of Catullus and other Latin poets; Sextus was evidently the head of the Palatine library.⁴³ Thus the libraries could have served as a kind of Roman counterpart to the Library of Congress, an official repository for a nation's literary production.

The exclusion of an author's works from the libraries, on the other hand, could have been a form of official censorship. Suetonius reported one anecdote which suggests that Augustus exercised just such a form of censorship. Augustus ordered Pompeius Macer, to whom he had assigned "the arranging of libraries," not to "make public" certain works by the young

Julius Caesar—that is, presumably, that they not be made available in the public libraries.⁴⁴ This anecdote strengthens the case that imperial displeasure at Ovid extended to the exclusion of his poems from the public libraries. The dramatic *damnatio memoriae* of book burning, suffered by Ovid's contemporaries Titus Labienus and Cassius Severus, may have had a quiet counterpart in the banning of books from public libraries.⁴⁵

The evidence for general access to Rome's public libraries may be considered inconclusive. While those who mentioned the libraries and said they used them come from the narrow worlds of literature and the imperial court, other evidence points to at least the expectation of general access. The presence of libraries in the great public baths, in particular, would suggest that many citizens had access to at least a few texts in a public collection. At the same time, given the economic, social, and cultural restrictions which bound most individuals in the ancient world, it seems safe to say that only a very small number are likely ever to have availed themselves of the opportunity to peruse the volumes in a public library.

Whatever the reality of public access to libraries, the ideology of public access remained attractive, at least to donors. The public library seemed to be an institution whose time in Rome had come; the three libraries founded during the Augustan period proved to be just the beginning. The example of the emperors seemed to inspire local benefactors, beginning with Pliny the Younger at Comum, to bestow libraries on cities throughout the empire, from Ephesus in the east to Timgad in the west.⁴⁶

Notes

1. For a survey of the evidence for libraries in Rome, → Anthony J. Marshall, "Library Resources and Creative Writing at Rome," *Phoenix* 30 (1976): 252–264, and Lorne Bruce, "Roman Libraries: A Review Bibliography," *Libri* 35 (1985): 89–106.

2. Agrippa, the closest friend and supporter of Augustus, is said to have written an oration *de tabulis omnibus signisque publicandis*, "on making public all paintings and statues" (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 35.9.26). As D. E. Strong points out, Agrippa sounded a note already heard in the Elder Cato's speech *uti praeda in publicum referatur*, "that booty be returned to public use" (H. Malcovati, *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta* [Turin, 1955], no. 98). Cato's concern seems to have been for religious propriety in the display of statues of the gods; Agrippa, on the other hand, wanted works of art to be on public display rather than "in the exile of villas." See D. E. Strong, "Roman Museums," in *Archaeological Theory and Practice*, Essays Presented to W. F. Grimes (London and New York, 1973), 248, 249.

3. Suetonius, *Julius Caesar* 44.1–3. Suetonius had reason to know the history of the libraries at Rome: he had held the post in charge of libraries in the imperial bureaucracy (H. G. Pflaum, *Les Carrieres procuratoriennes equestres sous le Haut-empire romain* [Paris: 1960–1961], no. 96). Suetonius must have appreciated that his post could be traced back to a scholar of Varro's rank.

4. Asinius Pollio established the library and rebuilt the Atrium Libertatis with

money from the sale of war booty (*ex manubiis*: Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 7.30.115; Isidorus, *Etymologiae* 6.5.1); therefore, it would have been after the celebration of his triumph over the Parthini, an Illyrian tribe, in 39 B.C. The notices that this was the first "public library" in Rome (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 7.30.115, 35.2.10; Isidorus, *Etymologiae* 6.5.1; Ovid, *Tristia* 3.1.71–72) and that Varro was the only man still living to receive a portrait in the library (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 7.30.115), show that the project must have been carried out before 28 B.C., when the temple of Palatine Apollo with its library (see below) was dedicated and when Varro died.

For the chronology, see F. W. Shipley, "Chronology of the Building Operations in Rome from the Death of Caesar to the Death of Augustus," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 9 (1931): 19, 20; A. B. Bosworth, "Asinius Pollio and Augustus," *Historia* 21 (1972): 462–473.

For the Atrium Libertatis, see S. B. Platner, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, revised by Thomas Ashby (Oxford: 1929) (hereafter cited as Platner-Ashby), s.v. Atrium Libertatis, 56–57; s.v. Bibliotheca Asinii Pollionis, 84; F. Castagnoli, "Atrium Libertatis," *Rendiconti della reale Accademia dei Lincei* ser. 8 vol. 1 (1946): 276–291; L. Richardson, Jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore: 1992) (hereafter cited as Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*), s.v. Atrium Libertatis, 41.

5. Suetonius, *Augustus* 29.3; Dio Cassius 53.1.3. Suetonius's use of the verb *addidit* of the porticoes and library may suggest that they represent later additions to Augustus's original plans for the complex.

For the temple of Apollo on the Palatine and the Palatine library, see Platner-Ashby, s.v. Apollo Palatinus, Aedes, 16–19; s.v. Bibliotheca Apollinis Palatini, 84; Ernest Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (London: 1968) (hereafter cited as Nash), s.v. Apollo Palatinus, Templum, vol. 1, 31–32; s.v. Bibliotheca Apollinis Palatini, vol. 1, 204–205. Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. Apollo Palatinus, Aedes, 14; s.v. Bibliotheca Apollinis Palatini, 58–59.

6. Suetonius (*Augustus* 29) and Dio Cassius (49.43.8) reported that Augustus had the Porticus Octaviae built in the name of his sister Octavia, while Ovid (*Aras Amatoria* 1.69–70) and others (Strabo 5.3.8 C 236; Plutarch, *Marcellus* 30; Festus 188) claimed that Octavia herself had the portico and library built.

For discussion of the problems surrounding the Porticus Octaviae, including its relationship to the Porticus Octavia, see Platner-Ashby, s.v. Porticus Octaviae, 427; Nash, s.v. Porticus Octaviae, vol. 2, 254–258; M. J. Boyd, "The Porticoes of Metellus and Octavia," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 21 (1953): 152–159; M. G. Morgan, "The Porticus of Metellus: A Reconsideration," *Hermes* 99 (1971), 480–505; T. P. Wiseman, "The Circus Flaminius," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 42 (1974): 3–26; Bjorn Olinder, *Porticus Octavia in Circo Flamini: Topographical Studies in the Campus Region of Rome* (Stockholm: 1977) → L. Richardson, Jr., "The Evolution of the Porticus Octaviae," *American Journal of Archaeology* 80 (1976): 57–64; Filippo Coarelli, "Il Campo Marzio Occidentale. Storia e topografia," *Melanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Antiquité* 89 (1977): 807–846. Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. Bibliotheca Porticus Octaviae, 59; s.v. Porticus Octaviae, 317–318.

7. Two libraries are attributed to Augustus's successor Tiberius: one in the Temple of the Deified Augustus and another in the *domus Tiberiana*, the portion of the imperial residence on the Palatine which was built by Tiberius. Vespasian's Temple of Peace, built between A.D. 71 and 75, included a library, and Trajan's Forum, built between A.D. 107 and 113, included a pair of libraries.

For the Temple of the Deified Augustus, see Suetonius, *Tiberius* 74; Martial 12.3; Platner-Ashby, s.v. *Bibliotheca Templi D. Augusti*, 84; Filippo Coarelli, *Roma. Guide archeologiche Laterza* 7 [Roma-Baria: 1983] (hereafter cited as Coarelli, *Roma*), 72–74. Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. Augustus, Divus, Templum, 45–46; s.v. *Bibliotheca Templi Divi Augusti*, 59.

For the *domus Tiberiana*, see Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 13.20.1; Cornelius Fronto, *Epistle* 4.5; Platner-Ashby, s.v. *Bibliotheca Domus Tiberianae*, 85; s.v. *Domus Tiberiana*, 191–194; Coarelli, *Roma*, 134–136. Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. *Domus Tiberiana*, 136–137.

For the Temple of Peace, see Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 5.21.9, 16.8.2; Platner-Ashby, s.v. *Pax, Templum*, 386–388; Nash, s.v. *Forum Pacis*, vol. 1, 439–445; Coarelli, *Roma*, 119–121. Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. *Pax, Templum*, 286–287.

For the Forum of Trajan, see Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 11.17; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistle* 9.16.27; Platner-Ashby, s.v. *Forum Traiani*, 237–245; Nash, s.v. *Forum Traiani*, vol. 1, 450–456; Coarelli, *Roma*, 110–115; Carla Amici, *Foro di Traiano: Basilica Ulpia e Biblioteche* (Rome: 1982). Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. *Forum Traiani*, 175–178.

8. *Tristia* 2.419–420: *suntque ea doctorum monumentis mixta virorum / muneribusque ducum publica facta patent*. See L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge: 1955), 307–308.

9. *Natural History* 35.2.10: *primus bibliothecam dicando ingenia hominum rem publicam fecit*. See also *Natural History* 7.30.115: *in bibliotheca, quae prima in orbe ab Asinio Pollione ex manubiis publicata Romae est*; and Isidorus, *Etymologiae* 6.5.1: *primum . . . Romae bibliothecas publicavit Pollio*.

10. The *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* defines the contemporary public library in the United States as a “public institution supported by taxation, one that opens its collections, facilities, and services, without distinction, to all citizens” (Frank B. Sessa, in *ELIS* [1978], s.v. *Public Libraries, International: History of the Public Library*, vol. 24, 267). This definition, of course, represents an ideal, one which has not always been achieved. In the American South, for example, blacks were forced to start their own libraries in communities where they were not permitted to use the public libraries; Andrew Carnegie gave money to the city of Greensboro, North Carolina, to build separate public libraries for whites and blacks.

The Roman world certainly knew prejudice based on ethnicity; but the more important distinctions were those based on social class and wealth. One could not at a glance have known who was a Roman citizen, and who was not; and in A.D. 212, a decree of the emperor Caracalla conferred Roman citizenship upon all free inhabitants of the empire. For members of the upper classes and their dependents, neither “national origin” nor gender would have hindered their access to Rome’s libraries.

11. *Epistle* 1.3.15–20:

*quid mihi Celsus agit? monitus multumque monendus,
privatas ut quaerat opes et tangere vitet
scripta Palatinus quaecumque recepit Apollo,
ne, si forte suas repetitum venerit olim
grex avium plumas, moveat cornicula risum
furtivis nudata coloribus.*

For the date of the *Epistles*, see Augustus S. Wilkins, ed., *The Epistles of Horace* (London-New York: 1888), xiii–xvii.

12. Horace, *Epistle* 1.8.

13. C. E. Boyd, *Public Libraries and Literary Culture in Ancient Rome* (Chicago: 1915), ↗ F. W. Hall, review of Boyd, *Public Libraries and Literary Culture in Ancient Rome*, in *Classical Review* 36 (1922): 31–32.

14. *Epistle* 2.1.214–218:

*verum age et his, qui se lectori credere malunt
quam spectatoris fastidia ferre superbi,
curam redde brevem, si munus Apolline dignum
vis complere libris et vatibus addere calcar,
ut studio maiore petant Helicon virentem.*

See C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry. Epistles Book II: The Letters to Augustus and Florus* (Cambridge: 1982), 238–240.

15. *Tristia* 3.1:

1–2 “*Missus in hanc venio timide liber exulis urbem:
da placidam fesso, lector amice, manum;*”

19–22 “*dicite, lectores, si non grave, qua sit eundum,
quasque petam sedes hospes in urbe liber.*”
*haec ubi sum furtim lingua titubante locutus,
qui mihi monstraret, vix fuit unus, iter.*

59–72 *inde tenore pari gradibus sublimia celsis
ducor ad intonsi candida templa dei,
signa peregrinis ubi sunt alterna columnis,
Belides et stricto barbarus ense pater,
quaque viri docto veteres cepere novique
pectore, lecturis inspicienda patent.
quaerebam fratres, exceptis scilicet illis,
quos suus optaret non genuisse pater.
quaerentem frustra custos e sedibus illis
praepositus sancto iussit abire loco.
altera templa peto, vicino iuncta theatro:
haec quoque erant pedibus non adeunda meis.
nec me, quae doctis patuerunt prima libellis,
atria Libertas tangere passa sua est.*

79–82 *interea, quoniam statio mihi publica clausa est,
privato liceat delituisse loco.
vos quoque, si fas est, confusa pudore repulsae
sumite plebeiae carmina nostra manus.*

16. The *domus Tiberiana*: *Attic Nights* 13.20.1; temple of Peace: 5.21.9, 16.8.2; Forum of Trajan: 11.17.1. For these three libraries, see note 7, above.

17. Discussions in townhouses and country estates: at the villas of Herodes Atticus near Athens (*Attic Nights* 1.2.1); at the table of the philosopher Favorinus (2.22.1); at the villa of a friend at Antium (17.10.1); at the country place of a rich friend at Tibur (19.5.1).

18. Discussions in public spaces: in the Titian baths (*Attic Nights* 3.1.1); in the square of the Forum of Trajan (13.25.2); in the park of Agrippa (14.5.1); among the booksellers in the *vicus Sandalarius* (18.4.1); in the shrine of Carmentis (18.7.2); in the *area Palatina* (20.1.2).

19. *Epistle* 4.5.

20. For a summary of the issues, see the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: 1970), s.v. *Historia Augusta*, 520–521.

21. *Historia Augusta*, *Probus* 2.1: “I have used primarily books from the *Bibliotheca Ulpia*, in my time in the Baths of Diocletian, and also from the *domus Tiberiana*” (*Usus autem sum . . . praecipue libris ex Bibliotheca Ulpia, aetate mea Thermis Diocletianis, et item ex domo Tiberiana*).

22. *Aurelian* 1.7 (Junius Tiberianus to “Flavius Vopiscus”): “I will arrange that the linen books be brought out for you from the *Bibliotheca Ulpia*” (*curabo autem ut tibi ex Ulpia Bibliotheca et libri linteī proferantur*).

Aurelian 1.10 (“Flavius Vopiscus” to “Ulpian” [?]): “If you are not content with this work . . . you should also ask for the linen books, which the *Bibliotheca Ulpia* will furnish to you when you want” (*si hoc contentus non fueris . . . linteos etiam libros requiras, quos Ulpia tibi Bibliotheca, cum volueris, ministrabit*).

Aurelian 8.1: “I recently found in the *Bibliotheca Ulpia* among the linen books a letter of the deified Valerian written about the emperor Aurelian” (*Inveni nuper in Ulpia Bibliotheca inter linteos libros epistolam divi Valeriani de Aureliano principe scriptam*).

Aurelian 24.7: “I learned these things from respected men, and I reread them in books of the *Bibliotheca Ulpia*” (*haec ego et a gravibus viris comperi et in Ulpiae Bibliothecae libris relegi*).

Tacitus 8.1: “There is in the *Bibliotheca Ulpia* in the sixth case an ivory book, in which this decree of the Senate has been written, which Tacitus himself has signed with his own hand” (*habet in Bibliotheca Ulpia in armario sexto librum elephantinum, in quo hoc senatus consultum perscriptum est, cui Tacitus ipse manu sua subscripsit*).

Tacitus 10.3: The emperor Tacitus, claiming the historian Cornelius Tacitus as a relative, ordered that ten copies of the historian’s works be made each year and that they be placed in all libraries.

Carus, Carinus, Numerian 11.3: the Senate honors Numerian as an orator with a statue in the *Bibliotheca Ulpia*.

23. See E. Groag, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädia d. klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1917), s.v. Iunius (no. 184): 1108–1109; E. Hohl, “Über den Ursprung der *Historia Augusta*,” *Hermes* 55 (1920): 37–40; Lorne D. Bruce, “A Reappraisal of Roman Libraries in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*,” *Journal of Library History* 16 (1981): 551–573.

24. In a recent study of ancient literacy, William Harris makes this estimate: “The likely overall illiteracy level of the Roman Empire under the principate is almost certain to have been above 90 percent” (*Ancient Literacy* [Cambridge, Mass.: 1989], 22).

25. See Raymond J. Starr, “The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World,” *Classical Quarterly* 37 (1978): 213–223.

26. Pliny the Younger, *Epistle* 1.13; A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny* (Oxford: 1966), 114–116.

27. Vitruvius 7.pref.4–7.

28. Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* 4.Pref.2; Alexander Dalzell, “C. Asinius Pollio and the Early History of Public Recitation at Rome,” *Hermathena* 86 (1955): 26–27.

Marcus Terentius Varro may have collaborated with Pollio in the establishment of public recitations. Varro wrote a book *de lectionibus* which probably dealt with the subject of recitations. The prominent place accorded to Varro in the decoration of Pollio’s library, as the only living man to receive a portrait, has led to the suggestion that Pollio may have honored Varro not only as an author but also as Caesar’s

"librarian" and as a collaborator in Pollio's own library project. See Friedrich Ritschl, "Die Schriftstellerei des M. Terentius Varro," *Opuscula Philologica* vol. 3 (Leipzig: 1877), 460–463; H. Funaioli, *Grammaticae Romanae Fragmenta*, 209; Dalzell, 25; Shipley, "Chronology of the Building Operations . . ." (note 4, above): 20; J. Andre, *La Vie et l'Oeuvre d'Asinius Pollion* (Paris: 1949), 119.

29. Horace, *Epistle* 2.2.92–105; Acron on Horace *Satire* 1.10.38; Pliny the Younger, *Epistle* 1.13.3; Juvenal, 7.36–37; Dalzell, "C. Asinius Pollio . . ." (note 28, above): 26–27; N. Horsfall, "The collegium poetarum," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 23 (1976): 83–85; Brink, *Horace on Poetry. Epistles Book II . . .* (note 14, above), 315, 322.

30. Suetonius, *Augustus* 29.3; *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 2435 verso; Tacitus, *Annals* 2.37; Dio Cassius 58.9.3; Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (Ithaca: 1977), 19, 120; F. Castagnoli, "Sulla biblioteca del tempio di Apollo Palatino," *Rendiconti della reale Accademia dei Lincei* ser. 8, vol. 4 (1949): 382.

→ David Thompson, "The Meetings of the Roman Senate on the Palatine," *American Journal of Archaeology* 85 (1981): 335–339.

32. Just as the Palatine temple of Apollo, in which the patron god of Augustus was worshipped, was so closely linked to the house of Augustus as to be a part of it, so also the Palatine library given by Augustus and attached to the temple might be viewed as part of his house; indeed, the library seems to have lain just on the opposite side of a courtyard from the house. See Gianfilippo Carettoni, "I problemi della zona Augusteo del Palatino alla luce dei recenti scavi," *Rendiconti della pontificia Accademia romana di Archeologia* 39 (1966–1967): 55–75; Carettoni, "Le costruzioni di Augusto e il Tempio di Apollo sul Palatino," *Quaderni del Centro di studio per l'archeologia etrusco-italica, Archeologia Laziale* 1 (1978): 72–74; Carettoni, "La decorazione pittorica della casa di Augusto sul Palatino," *Römische Mitteilungen* 10 (1983): 373–419.

At least one other public library may have been the setting for recitations, namely, the library in the Porticus Octaviae. Pliny the Elder mentioned a *Curia Octaviae*, which he then called a *schola* (*Natural History* 36.28–29); these two designations for the same building suggest that it could have been used both as a formal meeting place (*Curia*) and as a place for study and discussion (*schola*). It seems reasonable to assume that when the Senate met in the Porticus Octaviae, as it did on at least one occasion (Dio Cassius 55.8.1), it convened in the portico's library, hence a designation as *Curia*. If this library could have accommodated Senate meetings, presumably it could also have accommodated recitations.

33. Baths of Trajan: Platner-Ashby, s.v. *Thermae Traiani*, 534–536; Nash, s.v. *Thermae Traiani*, vol. 2, 472–477; Coarelli, *Roma*, 202–204. Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. *Thermae Traiani*, 397–398.

Baths of Caracalla: Platner-Ashby, s.v. *Thermae Antoninianae*, 520–524; Nash, s.v. *Thermae Antoninianae*, vol. 2, 434–441, and fig. 1237; Coarelli, *Roma*, 332–335. Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. *Thermae Antoninianae*, 387–389.

Baths of Diocletian: Platner-Ashby, s.v. *Thermae Diocletiani*, 527–530; Nash, s.v. *Thermae Diocletiani*, vol. 2, 448–453; Coarelli, *Roma*, 255–257. Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. *Thermae Diocletiani*, 391–393.

34. Fikret Yegül, *Baths and Bathings in Classical Antiquity* (New York: 1992), 172–173.

35. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6.8679. See M. Ihm, "Die Bibliotheken im alten Rom," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 10 (1893): 527.

36. George W. Houston, "The Slave and Freedman Personnel of Roman Public Libraries," Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association, 1991.

37. See notes 21 and 22, above, and Bruce, "A Reappraisal . . ." (note 23, above): 562–563.

38. Michel Seve, "Sur le taille des rayonnages dans les bibliothèques antiques," *Revue de Philologie* 117 (1990): 173–179; Lora Johnson, *The Hellenistic and Roman Library: Studies Pertaining to their Architectural Form* (Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 1984), 149–184; Yegül, *Baths and Bathing* . . . (note 34, above), 448, note 128.

39. Tibur: *Attic Nights* 9.14.3, 19.5.4; Patrae: 18.9.5.

40. P. Le Bas and W. H. Waddington, *Voyage archeologique en Grece et en Asie Mineure, 1843–1844* (Paris: 1853–1870), vol. 3.1, no. 1618.

41. R. E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora. Vol. III: The Literary and Epigraphical Testimonia* (Princeton: 1957), 150, no. 464.

For the library of Pantainos, see J. M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the Heart of Classical Athens* (London: 1986), 187–191.

42. *Tristia* 3.1.63–4: *quaeque viri docto veteres cepere novique / pectore lecturis inspicenda patent*.

43. Martial 5.5; see also Martial 12.3.

44. Suetonius, *Julius Caesar* 56.7. Pompeius Macer may have had some general supervision over all three public libraries at Rome; since, however, other names are associated with the "arranging" of the libraries of the Atrium Libertatis (Varro: see note 28, above) and of the Porticus Octaviae (Gaius Melissus: Suetonius, *Grammatici* 21), it seems more likely that Pompeius Macer's charge was the arranging of the Palatine library, the one most closely associated with Augustus.

Macer was the son of Theophanes of Mytilene, the Greek historian and advisor of Pompey the Great. Macer was himself a poet, writing an epic on the Trojan cycle, and a friend of Ovid. Ovid sent to Macer his poem *Ex Ponto* 2.10, in which he recalls his Grand Tour of Asia and Sicily made in the company of Macer and also mentions that Macer is related to Ovid's wife (lines 9–12). Macer was procurator of Asia under Augustus and was a friend of Tiberius. See Strabo 13.2.3 C 618; Ovid, *Amores* 2.18, *Ex Ponto* 2.10, 4.16.6; Rudolf Hanslik, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopaedie d. klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1952), s.v. Pompeius (no. 92), 2276–2277; Arthur L. Wheeler, "Topics from the Life of Ovid," *American Journal of Philology* 46 (1925): 20–21; Ronald Syme, *History in Ovid* (Oxford: 1978), 73.

45. Labienus: Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* 10.pref.4–10. Cassius: Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae* 2.4.11, 10.pref.7; Tacitus, *Annals* 1.72.3, 4.21.3.

The works of Titus Labienus and Cassius Severus were burned by senatorial decree at a time not very distant from Ovid's banishment, perhaps in the very year of his exile, A.D. 8. For the date, see Syme, *History in Ovid* (note 44, above), 211–214. On censorship and book burning, see Marshall, "Library Resources . . ." (note 1, above): 262–264; Richard A. Bauman, *Impietas in Principem* (Munich: 1974), 29, 31, note 42, 32; G. W. Clarke, "The Burning of Books and Catullus 36," *Latomus* 27 (1968): 575–580, and note 1, for earlier bibliography.

46. An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association in January 1989. My research was supported by a Research Council Grant from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. My thanks to Professor Suzanne Hildenbrand and two readers for the Justin Winsor Prize, who read yet another version, and to Professor Donald G. Davis, Jr. and two readers for *Libraries & Culture*, for their helpful comments.